

need for a service of love.” In parishes and neighborhoods across our Nation, Catholics take this call to heart, and that is why we find so many of you leading the armies of compassion. You are changing America one heart, one soul at a time, and I thank you.

Renewing the promise of America also includes ensuring a sound education for every single child. America’s Catholic schools play a vital role in our Nation. The schools were built by poor immigrants. They were staffed by legions of dedicated nuns and brothers and priests, and they have given millions of Americans the knowledge and character they need to succeed in life. Today, these schools are also serving thousands of non-Catholic children in some of our Nation’s poorest neighborhoods. I appreciate the tremendous sacrifices that many dioceses are making to keep their inner-city schools going. I am worried that too many of these schools are closing, and our Nation needs to do something about it.

This afternoon I’ll hold a meeting at the White House to discuss the difference America’s parochial schools are making in the lives of some of our neediest children. We see that difference right here in the Nation’s Capital. Pam Battle sat with Laura during my State of the Union Address. She’s a mom of two, Carlos and Calvin. A few years ago, these boys were in a public school that was not meeting Pam’s expectations. We passed what’s called the DC School Choice Incentive Act. Many of you in this room helped get that act passed. As a result of that act, her boys were able to transfer to Assumption Catholic School, a parochial school that serves an almost entirely African American student body.

Carlos became an A-student and president of his eighth grade class. He now attends high school at Georgetown Day. Calvin is a fifth-grader at Assumption; I’m told that he’s running for “Student of the Month.” [*Laughter*] Something I never achieved. [*Laughter*]

Pam has a big smile on her face when she comes to talk about the education her boys are receiving. “The main benefit of this program is that I can drop off my sons at school with peace of mind. It’s safe, and I know they are working up to their level.” That’s what Pam said. I believe every parent in

America should have that same peace of mind and every school in America should ensure that its students are working up to their fullest of potentials. I applaud our Nation’s Catholic schools. I will continue to work to help these schools reach more children in need so that our children have the skills they need to realize the full promise of the United States of America.

Finally, to realize the promise of America, we must have comprehensive immigration reform that enforces our laws and upholds the dignity of every single person in the United States. And now is the time for the United States Congress to get a bill to my desk that I can sign.

I thank you for your fine tradition. I applaud you for the love you—of neighbor you show through your organizations and your churches. I ask that you pray for our soldiers and their families in harm’s way. And I ask that you pray that in a troubled world, America may always remain a beacon of hope and of freedom.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:43 a.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Leonard A. Leo, member, Board of Directors, National Catholic Prayer Breakfast; and Donald W. Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Parochial Education Leaders and Parents

April 13, 2007

Secretary Spellings and I have just had the privilege of talking to some of our country’s leading educational entrepreneurs. We had the privilege of talking to parents whose lives have been positively affected by our Catholic school system. One of the great assets in the United States is the Catholic schools, which oftentimes educate the so-called hard-to-educate. And they do so in such a spectacular way.

The question is, how do we make sure that this important asset is sustainable? How do we make sure that our Catholic schools meet the needs of parents like Patricia, meet the expectations of some of our educational leaders like Ben. And one way is for the Federal

Government to provide opportunity scholarships for parents, so that they can redeem that scholarship at a school of their choice.

We've got such a program like that here in Washington, DC. It's been a very successful program, and Congress needs to make sure it gets fully funded. If any Congressman doubts the utility of a program, all they've got to do is speak to Wendy Cunningham, whose daughter takes advantage of this special funding for people, that enables her to say, "My school isn't meeting the needs, and therefore, I'd like to make another choice." A parental choice is a very important part of educational excellence. And one way to make sure that that's the case is not only to fully fund the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship but to provide these kinds of scholarships for school systems outside of Washington.

For example, we've just heard from Margaret Dames, who has got a marvelous school program in Bridgeport, Connecticut. And it seems like it makes sense to me for a parent in Bridgeport to be able to have the same kind of opportunity that a parent here in Washington, DC, has. Congress needs to reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act as well. We want all schools to be excellent. We want every school, public or parochial, to meet expectations and to give our children the skill sets necessary to realize the great promise of the country.

One thing is for certain, if you're interested in educational excellence, you can look at the Catholic schools in the United States of America, because they provide it, and for that, this country is very grateful.

Thank you all for coming, appreciate your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Patricia Weitzel-O'Neill, superintendent of Catholic schools, Archdiocese of Washington, DC; Ben Ketchum, assistant principal, St. Ann's Academy; and Margaret A. Dames, superintendent of schools and director of the Office for Education, Diocese of Bridgeport, CT.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

April 7

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush had Easter dinner with family members.

April 8

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush traveled to Fort Hood, TX, where they attended an Easter Sunday church service at the 13th Sustainment Command Chapel.

Later in the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to the Bush Ranch.

April 9

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Yuma, AZ, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Michael Christopher.

Later in the morning, the President participated in a briefing on U.S. Border Patrol use of unmanned aerial vehicles and toured the Mexico-U.S. border.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

April 10

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President-elect Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi of Mauritania. He then had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Fairfax, VA.

Later in the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced that he has nominated Peter Michael McKinley to be Ambassador to Peru.

The President announced that he has nominated Charles L. Hopkins III to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Operations, Preparedness, Security and Law Enforcement).